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Effects of Interparental Conflict Tactic Styles on the Psychological Adjustment of College Undergraduates

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Effects of Interparental Conflict Tactic Styles on the Psychological Adjustment of College Undergraduates

BY

Jodell D. Bauer

THESIS

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Abstract

Past research has examined the effect of the level of interparental conflict on the psychological adjustment of children and young adult offspring. Research has suggested that higher levels of conflict in intact, separated, and divorced homes have negative effects on the psychological adjustment of children and young adults. Recent studies have further examined interparental conflict by examining the styles with which parents resolve or cope with conflict and it's effect on their children. This study assessed the effect of different interparental conflict styles of mother and of father on college-age offspring. The three styles examined were negotiation, psychological aggression and physical aggression. Results indicate that only mothers who use negotiation as a conflict style have a more positive effect on the general affect of college-age offspring.

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Introduction

The ever-changing status of the family is a topic of concern to many psychologists and mental health professionals around the world. Changes in the structure of the family have been a common area of study in recent years. In order to help families cope with these changes, researchers have attempted to identify key factors in the adjustment and well being of the children of these families. Understanding those factors which most affect adjustment provides us with a potentially powerful tool for therapy and prevention. One factor frequently considered is that of parental conflict. This study will investigate interparental conflict and its impact on the adjustment of late adolescent children from intact, separated and divorced homes.

Interparental conflict has been identified as a major source of behavior problems in children of divorce rather than the divorce itself (Camara & Resnick, 1989). In fact, interparental conflict has been consistently identified as a source of behavioral problems in children across a wide array of structures and settings (Shaw, 1991). An examination of specific aspects of conflict may tell us how much and what kind of conflict is most detrimental to the members of the family. Although the amount of conflict has been shown to affect adjustment of children, how conflict is resolved may also play an essential role. To date research has focused almost solely on the adjustment of children of divorce and the family factors that affect their adjustment. The study of children of intact families and these same critical factors has been overlooked.

Structure

Research has suggested that the psychological adjustment of children of divorce was poorer than that of children from intact families. A meta-analysis of 95 studies comparing children from divorced and intact families found a small but reliable difference in their adjustment (Amato & Keith, 1991). This implied that divorce itself was detrimental to the well being of children; however, there is tremendous variability in the outcome of children of divorce just as there is for children of intact families (Clark & Clifford, 1996; Grych & Fincham, 1992). There has been some movement away from the assumption that divorce or separation necessarily leads to dysfunction (Clark & Clifford; Hanson, Saunders, & Kistner, 1992). A study examining the effects of family type and family conflict on self-concept of 219 adolescents ages 14-15 found that "...family relationships rather than family structure are more important for the development of self concept" (Lawler & Lennings, 1992, p. 75). This study used a 10- item scale designed for the study that tapped into arguments between child and parent and child and siblings and was scored to assess the frequency and perceived importance of the conflicts. Comparisons of children from divorced and intact families are less informative than examinations of variables that mediate post-divorce adaptation and shift the focus from structure to process (Grych & Fincham, 1992).

Conflict

A number of factors have been suggested that exacerbate or buffer the effects of divorce, such as: gender, age at time of divorce, time since divorce, SES, relationship between ex-spouses, quality of pre-divorce life, quality of relationship with custodial

parent, nature and severity of parental discord, and level of parental religious commitment (Evans & Bloom, 1996). These factors have been suggested to affect a host of areas and aspects of both school age children and adult children of divorce. One factor that has been shown to be highly correlated with psychological adjustment is the level of parental conflict (Lawler & Lennings, 1992; Butler, Mellon, Stroh, & Stern, 1995; Sprague & Kinney, 1997; Nelson, Hughes, Handal, Katz, Searight, 1993; Walsh & Stolberg, 1989; Weiner, Harlo, Adams, & Grebstein, 1995).

Using interviews to assess the degree of positive and negative affect expressed by parents, Camara & Resnick found the level of conflict between parents to be a better predictor of psychological adjustment than whether the child is from a divorced, intact or single parent family in a study of 82 families with a child age 7 to 9. In a review of previous research Grych & Fincham (1992) concluded that children from divorced families have been found to have higher levels of anxiety and poorer school performance than those from intact families, but only when conflict remains high after divorce. Other studies have demonstrated that high levels of conflict between parents are related to dysfunctional characteristics such as lying, stealing, disobedience at home and school, hostile physical interaction, and level of social interaction in children of divorce (Lawler & Lennings, 1992; Butler et al., 1995; Sprague & Kinney, 1997; Nelson, et al. 1993; Walsh & Stohlberg, 1989;Weiner et al., 1995). For example Walsh and Stohlberg (1989) in a study of 23 boys and 16 girls ages 6-11 found interspousal hostility significantly related to adjustment as measured by the Child Behavior Checklist-Parents Report and the Affect Questionnaire.

Researchers have most often measured the level of conflict between parents using questionnaires and inventories to assess the frequency of disagreements between parents. Buehler et al. (1998) measured the frequency of disagreements between parents as reported by their children using a six item inventory written for their study asking how often their parents did certain behaviors such as "yell at each other" in front of the child. Walsh & Stohlberg (1989) and Weiner et al. (1995) used the O'Leary Porter Scale of Marital Hostility to assess the level of parental conflict. This is a ten item inventory asking children how often different expressions of hostility occurred between their parents; higher scores indicate higher amounts of hostility. Nelson et al. (1993) and Sprague & Kinney (1997) used the conflict subscale of the Family Environment Scale which assesses "the amount of openly expressed anger, aggression and conflict among family members" (Nelson et al., 1993, p. 33). High conflict was defined as more than one standard deviation above the mean and low conflict more than one standard deviation below the mean.

Continuing parental conflict, specifically overt verbal and physical aggression, are cited as reliable predictors of children's functioning after divorce in a study involving 52 families contesting custody arrangements with a child, age 7-12 (Radovanovic, 1993). It is suggested that remaining in an unhappy, high conflict family has more adverse effects on children than a parental divorce (Booth & Edwards, 1990; Garber, 1991; Grych & Fincham, 1990; Holdnack, 1992). In fact children who are continually exposed to fighting and a hostile family environment may actually see divorce as an end to the

conflict. Divorce may improve their home atmosphere and they may in turn become more accepting of divorce (Kozuch & Cooney, 1995).

Interparental conflict has been found to affect adjustment, social competence, self-concept, romantic relationships, and attitudes about marriage in adolescents (Long, Forehand, Fauber, & Brody, 1987; Kozuch & Cooney, 1995; Jennings, Salts, & Smith, 1991). Long et al. (1987) cited the level of parental conflict, measured by the O'Leary-Porter Scale, as the critical variable associated with independently observed levels of cognitive and social competence in 40 adolescents ages 11-15. The study by Lawler & Lennings, involving 219 adolescent 14-15 year olds, found the level of parental conflict was the best predictor of adolescent self-concept with family type (intact, blended and sole parent) contributing a marginal effect. There was a significant relationship found between adjustment, and level of family conflict, but no significant relationship was found between adjustment and family structure in a study done with 285 undergraduate college students ages 17-24 by Nelson et al. (1993). To measure adjustment Nelson et al. (1993) administered a battery of measures including the Brief Symptom Inventory and the Global Severity Index, and to assess the level of conflict the conflict subscale of the Family Environment Scale was administered. Pawlak & Klein found a significant correlation between students perceptions of the level parental conflict, measured by the O'Leary-Porter Scale, and self esteem in a sample of 65 female and 57 male college students, ages 18-25. Another study involving 32 college students found that it was not simply divorce but post-divorce life that largely determined long term psychological adjustment (Oderberg, 1986).

Cooperation

Other studies have found interparental cooperation to be related to adjustment. Cooperation and lack of conflict have been found to be positive factors for children and resulted in less behavior problems in a study of 64 separated and divorced parents (Ehrenberg, 1996). Heath & MacKinnon (1988) found that parental cooperation is highly correlated with and predictive of a child's social competence in a study of 80 mothers separated for at least one year who had custody of a child between age 8-11 years. Twaite & Luchow (1996) in a review of literature examining custodial arrangements and parental conflict after divorce and their impact on adjustment, concluded that parental conflict is a more important predictor of post-divorce adjustment than type of arrangement. These investigators recommended that parents should be educated about the importance of avoiding overt hostility and establishing a co-parenting relationship, prior to awarding joint custody (Twaite & Luchow, 1996).

Healthy Conflict

Parental conflict can be a normal and healthy aspect of marriage. "In fact, exposure to some kinds of conflict may promote the development of constructive problem solving or coping strategies." (Grych & Fincham, 1990, p. 268). Therefore it is important to identify what dimensions of parental conflict are related to adjustment.

The effect that parental conflict has on children may be a direct effect due to the exposure to an intense stressor. The influence may be mediated by other factors such as the relationship between the parent and the child or it may be a combination of variables

(Grych & Fincham, 1992). Conflict becomes harmful when it results in a disruption in parenting. Fauber & Long, (1991) found that healthy child development is most likely to occur when there are high levels of parental warmth and acceptance, consistent behavior control and encouragement of individuality. As parents stray from this profile the likelihood of maladjustment increases. Interparental conflict may play a role in the deviation from this profile.

Conflict Styles

Some studies have expanded the concept of conflict and examined the tactic or resolution style used by the parents to express or resolve conflict rather than the level of conflict only. Initial findings support the hypothesis that level of conflict may not be as influential in psychological adjustment as the conflict tactic style. A meta-analysis of 25 studies published no earlier that 1980, measuring the relationship between the level interparental conflict and behavioral, emotional and social outcomes for children ages 18 and younger, confirmed an overall conflict-adjustment relationship that was strong and consistent across studies (Depner, Leino, & Chun, 1992). Depner, Leino, & Chun concluded a need for further refinement of the conflict-adjustment relationship specifying the various dimensions of conflict including the frequency, duration, intensity, themes, and conflict style. Psychologists have begun to look at how parents deal with conflict and how their style effects their child's adjustment.

Research has suggested that the concept of interparental conflict is multidimensional. Two important dimensions studied are the frequency of conflict and

the mode of expression (Buehler, Krishnakumar, Stone, Anthony, Pemberton, Gerard, & Barber, 1998). Cummings, Vogel, Cummings, & El-Sheick (1989) found 6-9 year-olds reported less negative affect when there was a clear resolution to conflict between two angry adults as opposed to no resolution. A study involving 82 families with 7-9 year-olds, looking at the effect of conflict resolution styles between divorced parents on child behavior and adjustment, found that "the degree of conflict between parents was not significantly related to any of the child measures, whereas the strategies used by parents to resolve conflicts with each other were" (Camara & Resnick, 1989, p. 568). The same study also found that family structure did not explain a significant amount of the variance in children's behavior (Camara & Resnick). In this study the father's resolution style was found to be more related to the child's behavior than the mother's style which was also predictive but to a lesser extent. Children whose fathers used verbal attacks to resolve conflict "engaged in less prosocial behavior, had lower self-esteem and showed more behavioral problems" (Camara & Resnick, p 568). Children whose fathers used compromise to resolve conflict "spent less unoccupied time during school play" (Camara & Resnick, p 568). There was no relationship found between verbal attacks used by mothers and their children's social behavior, however, children of mothers who used avoidance to resolve conflict were more likely to spend less time in solitary play (Camara & Resnick).

Buehler et al. (1998) examined the hypothesis that hostile ways of resolving interparental disagreements are associated with youth internalizing and externalizing problem behaviors. They tested the hypothesis that hostile conflict styles are strongly

related to problem behavior in children grades 5 and 8. Two types of hostile styles examined were overt (physical or verbal) and covert. Overt hostility was measured with a 6 item inventory asking the child to report the frequency of activities such as "call each other names" in front of them ranging from "never" to "very often". Covert conflict was measured in the same manner using 8 items asking to report frequency of acts such as "How often does one of your parents try to get you to side with one of them?" (Buehler et al., 1998, p. 123). They found that overt and covert styles together accounted for 21% of the variance and were positively associated with problem behaviors (Buehler, et al., 1998). These investigators also found that the frequency or level of conflict does not explain any additional variance.

Research in this area has important therapeutic implications. Over the years mental health professionals have focused on the structure of the family as a key variable in understanding child and adolescent adjustment (Nelson et al., 1993). If parental conflict tactic styles are found to have a more significant effect, the focus of therapy could be modified to address this issue. Therapists could help parents develop strategies to resolve conflicts that would be less damaging to their children. Butler, et al. (1995) presented a therapeutic model, which targets the ongoing conflict between biological parents. This therapeutic approach is based on negotiating cooperation between custodial and non-custodial parents. Interparental conflict style has equal implications for intact families, "...assessment of perceived family conflict should not necessarily be restricted to persons who are from non-intact families, since structurally intact families may experience high levels of conflict as well" (Nelson et al., p. 37).

Measures of Conflict Styles

Parental conflict tactic styles are the strategies by which parents express or resolve conflict. Ways that conflict can be resolved or expressed range from physical violence to cooperation, negotiation or reasoning. The study of parental conflict styles is relatively new and the instruments available are limited. Camara & Resnick (1989) investigated the styles of conflict resolution and cooperation between parents using a questionnaire based on the Conflict Resolutions Scales (Rands, Levinger & Mellinger, 1981), which was created to measure conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. Camara & Resnick's (1989) modified questionnaire measured four styles including verbal attack, avoid, compromise and physical expression of anger. A study by Buehler et al. (1998) examining the impact of conflict styles of parents on child behavior, measured the frequency of overt and covert conflict styles using six item measures written for their study. Items asked children, grades 5 and 8, to report how often their parents did any of the behaviors in front of them, sample items are "call each other names," or "tell each other to shut up". The response choices ranged from "never" to "very often".

The Conflict Tactic Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979) was developed to assess the overt means by which family members respond to conflict. It originally consisted of items administered to college students to measure their perceptions of tactics that they used with their siblings and that their parents used with them. The CTS has been used to measure post divorce conflict (Johnston, Gonzalez, & Cambell,1987), verbal aggression in parents of children 18 and younger (Straus, Gelles & Herrop, 1991), frequency of children's observations of marital aggression and aggression towards the children

themselves (Jouriles, Barling, & O'Leary, 1987), and verbal/symbolic aggression in American couples (Straus & Sweet, 1992). The CTS has also been used to examine the relationship between dimensions of interparental conflict and adjustment in undergraduate college students (Hanson, Saunders, & Kistner, 1992); and to assess parental conflict as one of a number of moderating variables in a comparison of aspects of adjustment of 287 college undergraduate students (Evans & Bloom, 1996). Of the 33 moderating variables assessed in the latter study, seven variables were found to account for 60% of the matrix variance; included in the seven variables are conflicted, disengaged and unhappy family which included low family idealization and marital satisfaction and high family conflict, interparental verbal aggression and interparental physical aggression as measured by the CTS (Evans & Bloom, 1996).

In this study the revised Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (CTS2) (Straus, Hamby, McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996) is used to assess the perceived conflict tactic style of the parents. The CTS2 was developed from the original CTS (Straus, 1979) which measures the extent to which partners engage in psychological and physical attacks on each other and also their use of reasoning or negotiation to deal with conflicts (Straus et al., 1996). The original CTS has been used in many studies since 1972 involving more than 70,000 participants from diverse backgrounds (Straus, et al., 1996). The theoretical basis for the CTS2 is the same as the original CTS. The CTS2 includes some improved items and two new scales including a sexual coercion scale and an injury scale (not used in this study). The CTS2 in its original form asks parents to rate themselves and their partner on the scales. The CTS2 can also be used to obtain data on parents by asking adolescents or

adult children of these parents to respond about the behavior of their parents towards each other (Straus et al., 1996).

The categories of the CTS2 measure the different conflict types that research has shown to play a significant role in the adjustment of children (Buehler et al., 1998; Camara & Resnick, 1989). These scales are physical aggression, psychological aggression and negotiation. Negotiation is defined by the authors of the CTS as "actions taken to settle a disagreement through discussion", psychological aggression is defined to include non verbal as well as verbal aggression such as "stomped out of the room", and physical aggression is defined as the use of physical force as a means of resolving a conflict (Straus et al., 1996). The negotiation scale is reflective of cooperation, which has been found to have positive effects on adjustment. The authors of the CTS2 suggest that since it is fundamentally the same as the original CTS the evidence supporting the CTS may also apply to the CTS2. The verbal and physical aggression subscales of the CTS have high Cronbach alpha coefficients of consistency between husband and wife ratings (.79-.83) and satisfactory concurrent validity measured by the correlation of college students' with parents' ratings (.33-.64). The internal consistency reliability of the CTS2 scales range from .79 to .95. There is also preliminary evidence of construct validity and discriminant validity. The scales of the CTS are not equivalent due to a higher number of items for the physical aggression scale (12 items) than the psychological aggression scale (7 items) and the negotiation scale (6 items).

Measures of Adjustment

Psychological adjustment refers to the psychological well being of an individual, which can include social and emotional functioning. There is no consensus in the literature on how to define or measure psychological adjustment. Studies measuring adjustment in children have used scales such as the Child Behavior Checklist and various measures to assess levels of social participation and aggression (Camara & Resnick, 1989; Walsh & Stohlberg, 1989). Clinical interviews are another method that researchers have used to assess psychological adjustment in children and young adults (Camara & Resnick; Luepnitz, 1979). To assess young adults or college undergraduates, researchers have used instruments measuring self-esteem, self-concept, ego identity and satisfaction with life scales (Clark, & Clifford, 1996; Nelson et al., 1993; Weiner et al., 1995). A number of studies have measured adjustment using assessment devices designed for a clinical population. Often a battery of tests are combined and clinical instruments are used such as the Beck Depression Scale and or the Brief Symptom Inventory (Nelson et al., 1993; Weiner et al., 1995). Because clinical instruments are not constructed to measure adjustment in a normal population there is some difficulty in interpreting the results of these studies.

The Mental Health Inventory (MHI) (Veit &Ware, 1983) has been used to assess psychological well being in several nonclinical populations. Zika & Chamberlain (1992) used the MHI to assess psychological well being in mothers and the elderly to find a relationship between psychological well being and meaning in life. The MHI has also been used to assess the psychological adjustment of intravenous drug users with

AIDS (Grummon, Rgiby, Orr, Procidano, & Reznikoff, 1994), to measure the mental health of post divorce adults (Birnbaum, Orr, Mikulincer, & Florian, 1997), and to assess the mental health of adolescents ages 14-19 (Ostroff, Woolverton, Berry, & Lesko,1996).

In this study the Mental Health Inventory (MHI) (Veit & Ware, 1983) is used to assess psychological adjustment. The scale measures psychological distress and well being within the general population. It consists of 38 items which represent five factors including anxiety, depression, emotional ties, general positive affect and loss of behavioral/emotional control. Response scores are summed to calculate a Mental Health Index Score ranging from 38 to 226. Higher index scores indicate psychological well being and an absence of psychological distress. The scale is appropriate for ages 13 through 70. The reliability (internal consistency) for the five lower order scales (anxiety, depression, loss of behavioral/emotional control, general positive affect, and emotional ties) ranges from .83 to .91 and from .92 to .96 for the scales based on the higher order factors (psychological distress and psychological well-being) and the MHI summary score (Veit & Ware, 1983). The stability coefficients range from .56 to .64 which, according to Veit & Ware, indicates a substantial portion of the variance is stable over a one-year interval. They also established a sound psychometric basis for the use of the single MHI summary score.

Few studies have investigated the factors of parental conflict and adjustment in the context of the intact family. This study examines the relationship between perceived conflict tactic styles of the mother and father and the psychological adjustment of college

students in divorced and intact families as measured by the Mental Health Inventory. A comparison is made of the adjustment of students whose parents use three different conflict tactic styles: psychological aggression, physical aggression and negotiation. Perceived conflict style of both the mother and the father will be measured using scores on the Conflict Tactic Scale adapted to be used by a son or daughter. Because this study examines variation within a normal population, it is inappropriate to use a clinical instrument to assess adjustment. Individual subscales of the MHI were also examined in relationship to interparental conflict.

Students from homes where the perceived conflict tactic style of both parents is negotiation are expected to score significantly higher on adjustment than students from homes where the perceived conflict tactic style of one or both parents is psychological aggression. Students from homes where physical aggression is used by one or both parents are expected to score significantly lower than both negotiation and psychological aggression groups on psychological adjustment. Table 1 diagrams the expected interactions between these variables.

Method

Participants

Data was collected on 200 male and female introductory psychology students. Of the 200 participants 197 completed protocols. The sample consisted of 136 females and 61 males with 67% from intact families, 20% from divorced, 10% from single parent households, 2% from widowed families, and 1% from separated families. The age range for the sample was 18 to 25 years old, the mean age of females was 18.61 years old and the mean age of males was 19.34 years old.

Measures

A demographic form provided information on the student's age, gender, parent's marital status (married, divorced, widowed, single parent home, or other), number of years since divorce (if applicable), and whether the student currently resides at home.

The Conflict Tactics Scale-2 (CTS2) was used to assess the perceived conflict tactic style of each parent. This study used the three original scales (negotiation, psychological aggression, and physical aggression) modified to be filled out by the student for each parent. The CTS-2 consists of 25 items to be answered for each parent (50 items total), using a 7 point Likert scale that ranges from "once in the past year" to "more than 20 times in the last year" and includes the options "never happened" and "not in the past year, but it did happen before". The scale scores are converted into percentiles to equalize the scales. The higher the percentage the greater use of tactics of negotiation, psychological aggression, or physical aggression. This categorizes each

parent into one of the three groups depending on which tactic is scored with the highest percentage. Sample questions are as follows:

"My mother insulted or swore at my father."

"My father twisted my mothers arm or hair."

"My mother explained her side of a disagreement to my father."

The Mental Health Inventory (MHI) (Veit & Ware, 1983) was used to assess psychological adjustment for this nonclinical population. It consists of 38 items answered on a six choice response scale ranging from complete confirmation to complete rejection of the applicability of the question to the participants life over the preceding two weeks. Response scores were summed to calculate a MHI score ranging from 38 to 226. There are six subscales of the MHI including anxiety (9 items), depression (4 items), loss of behavioral/emotional control (9 items), general positive affect (10 items), emotional ties (2 items), and life satisfaction (1 item).

Procedure

Students in introductory psychology classes were solicited by offering research credits, which are required for the course. Informed consents were elicited and the measures were given all at once in a packet to each student. The questionnaires were counterbalanced to control for order effects. Participants received a debriefing statement upon completion of their protocol. See appendices for all measures and statements used.

Analysis

The independent variables are all categorical and the dependent variable, the MHI score, is an interval ratio. Analysis was undertaken using SPSS to run a 2-way ANOVA for independent means.

Results

Table 2 illustrates how the mothers and fathers were categorized into the three conflict styles as measured by the CTS-2. This table shows that 87.6% of the fathers were categorized into the negotiation category, 11.3% were categorized into the psychological aggression category and 1% were perceived as occupying the physical aggression category. Of the mothers, 86.3% were classified in the negotiation category, 13.2% were perceived as being in the psychological aggression category and .5% were perceived as physically aggressive in conflict style. Of the 197 instrument packets completed 8 were excluded from the analysis because one of the parents was not clearly classified.

A 2-way analysis of variance was performed to test the correlation between conflict style of mother and of father and the student's score on the MHI. Results are presented in Table 3. There was no significant interaction between the conflict styles of mother and of father. There was no significant main effect of conflict style of mother or of father. Subscales of the MHI including anxiety, depression, loss of emotional and behavioral control, general positive affect, and life satisfaction were individually analyzed. Results are presented in Table 4. There was a significant main effect of mother's conflict style on the general positive affect scale, $F(1,183)=3.9$, $p < .05$. Participants who perceived their mothers as negotiators ($M=37.50$) scored significantly higher in general positive affect than participants whose mothers were perceived as psychologically aggressive ($M=34.04$) regardless of the conflict style of the father. There

were no mothers in the analysis that were perceived to be in the physical aggression category.

An analysis of variance was performed to test the effect of gender on the participants scale on the MHI and it's subscales. There was no significant interaction between gender and any of the scores. The sample consisted of 61 males (31%) and 136 females (69%).

The results of an ANOVA between marital status of the subject's parents and the MHI score were not significant. The sample consisted of 67.5% from intact families, 19.8% from divorced and 1% from separated households . Of the divorced and separated families 11.7% had been separated or divorced for 12 or more years. The results of an analysis of variance between time since separation and the participant's MHI score was not significant. Analysis of the subscale scores and time since divorce were also not significant.

Discussion

This study was concerned with the link between the conflict styles of mothers and fathers and the psychological adjustment of their young adult offspring. The single significant correlation between the general positive affect scale of the MHI and mothers who use negotiation indicates an area where the conflict style of mothers particularly may have a positive effect on the mental health of these college-age offspring. Higher scores on the general positive affect scale indicate a positive state of mental health. The scale consists of 10 items; a sample item is "During the past month, how much of the time have you felt that the future looks hopeful and promising?" These results indicate that mothers who use negotiation as their primary conflict tactic style may have a more positive effect on the psychological well being of their college age children than do mothers who use psychological aggression as their primary conflict tactic style. This impact is a significant one whereas fathers, even those with negotiation as their style, do not influence the mental health of their sons and daughters to the same degree. The greater influence of mothers on their son's or daughter's psychological well being may be due to more contact with mothers both while in the home and also after leaving for college. Typically students from divorced or single parent homes reside with their mothers. In previous studies parental cooperation was found to have positive effects on the social competence and behavior of children (Ehrenberg, 1996; Heath & MacKinnon, 1988). Heath & MacKinnon's (1988) study included 80 mothers who had been separated for at least one year. Obviously the mothers in this study like the mothers in the 1988 study,

who engaged in cooperative or negotiating tactics, had a positive impact on their offspring.

The results of Camara & Resnick's study (1989) which found fathers to have a greater influence on the adjustment of children may not be that inconsistent from the findings of this study. They found fathers who use verbal attacks or aggressive styles of conflict resolution to have a more negative effect on children's behaviors at play than did the mothers who used verbal attacks. They found this to be particularly so with the boys in the sample, "although boys and girls where similarly affected, girls overall exhibited more prosocial behavior and higher self-esteem and fewer behavioral problems" (Camara & Resnick, 1989, p. 568). This implies gender differences, not found to be significant in this study, that may explain some of the differences in results. If fathers exhibit some extra negative influence over boys when using verbal aggression then perhaps mothers exhibit some extra positive influence over girls by using negotiation tactics. The uneven number of females (N=136) and males (N=61) in the current study may diminish the visibility of the father's effect on adjustment. The Camara & Resnick (1989) study assessed 7-9 year olds using behavior observations unlike the current study which does not assess for observable behavioral acts and also measures the adjustment of much older children.

The non-significant results of the ANOVA between perceived conflict styles of mothers and of fathers and the overall MHI score may be due to an uneven sample, which was poorly representative of the psychological aggression or physical aggression conflict styles. Table 2 illustrates that the vast majority of this sample perceived their parents to

fit the category of negotiation. This college sample may represent a more well-adjusted portion of the general population. These students may be more flexible and resilient to change or they could also be experiencing some relief from their family environment while away at college. Identifying and examining a college age population, from highly conflicted homes may provide more insight into the impact of the parental conflict tactic styles with this age population.

The non-significant results between years of separation and the MHI score and it's subscales may be due to the fact that a majority of the divorced or separated sample (56%) were from homes where parents had been divorced or separated for more than 12 years. Students from homes where divorce happened many years ago are less likely to continue experience or remember interparental hostility and therefore are less likely to be currently affected by interparental conflict. Students whose parents recently divorced are more likely to be witnessing interparental conflict and therefore be affected psychologically by that conflict. This study also did not examine the level or amount of contact that the divorced or separated parents have with one another. It is possible that many of the participant's non-custodial parents may have little or no contact with the custodial parent and therefore little parental conflict is observed by the adult child. The non-significant difference between the psychological adjustment of students from divorced, separated, and intact families supports the previous research that it is the process not the structure, which is important in the adjustment of this population.

The MHI may be too broad an instrument to identify adjustment difficulties that result from differences in conflict styles of mothers and fathers. The MHI attempts to

assess aspects of positive and negative mental health but may not assess specific aspects of psychological adjustment adequately. It may be that young adults are affected in specific areas of their lives, such as their romantic relationships, self-image, perceptions of family life, and the ways in which they deal with conflict, which are not adequately measured by the MHI. The effects of parental conflict styles may be more specific and require instruments, which measure in more detail specific aspects of mental health. It is possible that clinical measures used in previous research, such as the Brief Symptom Inventory and the Beck Depression Inventory, are more sensitive to differences which measure poor psychological adjustment even with a normal, functioning population. The MHI may not be an adequately sensitive measure of psychological adjustment, especially when attempting to correlate it with a negative factor such as parental conflict. Another possible reason for insignificant results may be that the MHI is measuring the mental health of the student in the last month and the CTS-2 assesses conflict in their home over the last year. Most students are out of the household during the academic year and may be experiencing relief from any home conflict that may occur.

The CTS may not adequately measure the tactic styles of mothers and fathers. The scale is made up of 12 physical aggression items, 7 psychological aggression items and 6 negotiation items. The parents were placed into categories according to the tactic which their child perceived most prominent. This may be problematic for two reasons. First the uneven number of items makes it difficult to score a high percentage on a scale with more items such as the physical aggression scale and easier to score a high percentage on a scale with fewer items such as the negotiation

scale. Secondly this instrument groups together parents who use only slightly more psychological aggression tactics than negotiation strategies and those who use a much larger percentage of psychological aggression tactics than negotiation strategies. Differences due to frequency of endorsement of individual items were not analyzed in this study.

Those studies, which have found significant differences in adjustment when comparing conflict styles of parents, have examined a much younger population. Camara & Resnick (1989) found a significant effect of conflict resolution styles of divorced parents on child behavior and adjustment when examining 7-9 year olds. Buehler et al. (1998) examined 5th and 8th grade children and found hostile styles of resolution were positively associated with problem behaviors. The measures used to assess adjustment in these and other studies of young children were observations of social participation, number of playmates, and instances of hostile and positive physical interaction in school, as well as use of instruments such as the Child Behavior Checklist, all of which assesses external, observable behaviors.

Measuring the adjustment of young children is very different than measuring the mental health of college students. Younger children tend to engage in more overt disruptive behaviors that can be directly observed more readily than the internalized psychological adjustment of an young adult. It may be that late adolescent children act out overtly as well but fewer of this population will be found attending college. The MHI does not assess overt problem behaviors, as do the measures used in studies involving

younger children. Younger children living directly in the conflicted home are likely to exhibit more adverse adjustment than older adult children with the capacity to escape the home environment.

College-age children from conflicted homes may have adjusted to or escaped the conflict or may experience difficulty only later in life when faced with relationship challenges of their own. Also young adult children from high conflict homes may be less likely to be supported or enrolled in a four-year university. Studies using undergraduate college samples which have found significant correlations between parental conflict and psychological adjustment have measured the overall level of conflict in the home using various scales and inventories such a the O'Leary-Porter Scale of Overt Marital Hostility and the conflict subscale of the Family Environment Scale (Weiner et al., 1995; Pawlack &Klein, 1997; and Nelson et al., 1993;). These studies, examining older children, have not yet examined the effect of parental conflict resolution styles. This study assessed the conflict tactic styles of mothers and fathers but did not evaluate the level of conflict between parents. In addition previous studies have assessed specific aspects of psychological functioning such as self-esteem, ego identity, or depression using measures such as the Global Severity Index, the Brief Symptom Inventory, and various self esteem measures (Pawlak & Klein, 1997; Oderberg, 1986; Nelson et al., 1993). The MHI is a more global measure of psychological adjustment and may not tap into the specific aspects of adjustment which may be affected by the conflict tactic styles of mothers and fathers.

It may be that the level of the conflict has more impact on adjustment than conflict tactic styles. It is also possible that a combination of style and degree or frequency of conflict is more highly correlated with poor adjustment. Studies measuring the level of conflict have relied on frequencies of disagreements and various conflicts between parents. This factor is not measured by the CTS-2. It is possible that conflict tactic styles are independent of the level of conflict and may represent a more complex aspect of conflict that is not measured as easily with frequencies as is the level of conflict. The adult child's perception of their parent's style may be easily influenced by other factors such as reports from outside sources or one parent complaining about the other to the child or in front of the child. The CTS-2 asks the child how often a specific tactic is used but does not require or specify that it is witnessed by the child directly. It is important to note however that the perception of the style, whether factually accurate or not, is what is correlated with adjustment in this study.

Although this study did not find a significant correlation between conflict tactic styles of mothers and fathers and the participant's overall MHI score, it did find a correlation between general positive affect and mother's conflict tactic style. This finding suggests that further investigation of the positive impact of parents who use negotiation tactics is needed. Further refinement of the measures of various conflict tactic styles of parents along with more detailed adjustment measures which allow one to accurately assess various aspects of psychological adjustment may provide a better understanding of the effect of parental conflict on the psychological adjustment of young adult children.

Since some conflict is normal or even healthy as mentioned earlier, clinicians may help parents to learn to use negotiation as a positive means to resolve conflict within the home. Clinicians may assist parents in developing specific skills of negotiation. These skills may serve to improve the co-parental relationship and benefit aspects of psychological adjustment in college age children as well provide their children with the skills to be successful in future relationships of their own.

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Table 1

Expected Interactions of Interparental Conflict and Psychological Adjustment of Undergraduates

	Mother's Style			
		Negotiation	Psychological Aggression	Physical Aggression
Father's Style	Negotiation	High Adjustment	Unknown	Low Adjustment
	Psychological Aggression	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
	Physical Aggression	Low Adjustment	Low Adjustment	Low Adjustment

Table 2

Categorization of Mothers and Fathers into Perceived Conflict Styles by Undergraduate Offspring

Conflict Style	Mother	Father
Negotiation	164 86.3%	170 87.6%
Psychological Aggression	25 13.2%	22 11.3%
Physical Aggressive	1 .5%	2 1%

Table 3

Mental Health Inventory Scores of Children of Parents in Various Conflict Styles

Conflict Tactic Styles		MHI Score (mean)	Total Number
Father	Mother		
Negotiation	Negotiation	157.27	150
	Psychological Aggression	147.63	16
	Physical Aggression		0
Psychological Aggression	Negotiation	155.31	13
	Psychological Aggression	143.75	8
	Physical Aggression		0
Physical Aggression	Negotiation	170.00	1
	Psychological Aggression	141.00	1
	Physical Aggression		0

Table 4

MHI Subscale Scores of Children of Parents in Various Conflict Styles

		Mental Health Inventory (MHI)					
Conflict Styles	Tactic	Anxiety	Depression	General Positive Affect	Emot Ties	Emot /Beh Control	Life Sat.
Mother	Father						
Neg.	Neg. (150)	37.85	16.85	37.49	7.85	41.40	4.19
	Psy.Agg. (13)	37.54	16.54	37.85	7.54	40.23	4.08
	Phy. Agg. (1)	41.00	18.00	35.00	11.00	46.00	4.00
	Total (164)	37.84	16.83	37.50 *	7.85	41.34	4.18
Psy. Agg.	Neg. (16)	34.81	15.94	33.94	7.06	41.00	3.88
	Psy.Agg. (8)	34.38	14.38	34.75	7.50	38.25	3.63
	Phy. Agg (1)	36.00	15.00	30.00	6.00	37.00	5.00
	Total (25)	34.72	15.40	34.04 *	7.16	39.96	3.84
Phy. Agg.	Neg. (0)						
	Psy.Agg. (0)						
	Phy. Agg (0)						
	Total (0)						
Total	Neg. (166)	37.55	16.76	37.14	7.78	41.36	4.16
	Psy.Agg. (21)	36.33	15.71	36.67	7.52	39.48	3.90
	Phy. Agg (2)	38.50	16.50	32.50	8.50	41.50	4.50
	Total (189)	37.43	16.64	37.04	7.76	41.15	4.13

* $p < .05$

Note: number of participants classified into each category is represented in parenthesis

Appendix A

Consent Form

Project Title: Conflict Styles

Investigator: Jodell Bauer

I understand that this study is an investigation of conflict styles of parents. I understand I will be asked to answer questions pertaining to my parents and myself for research purposes. The questionnaires will take approximately one hour to complete. I will receive class credit for my participation.

I understand that my participation in this study will be anonymous, that is to say that my personal identity will not be attached to my questionnaires.

There are no known or anticipated negative consequences for most individuals as a result of participating in this study. However, I understand that some individuals may find this subject distressing. If I choose to participate, I retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time. If I do withdraw from the study, my data will be destroyed and I will receive experimental credit.

I hereby freely consent to take part in this research project.

_____ _____

participant date

Appendix B

Demographic Form

Please answer all of the following questions.

1. Gender (circle one) M / F
2. Age- _____
3. Marital status of parents (circle one) Married / Divorced / Separated /Widowed

   Other (please specify)_____
4. If divorced or separated how long?_____
5. Do you live with your parents? Yes No
6. If you don't live with your parents, how long since you have lived with

   them?_____

Appendix C

Relationship Behaviors

No matter how well parents get along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired, or for some other reason. Parents have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when they have differences. Please fill in the circle for how many times you parent did each of these things in the past year. If your parent did not do one of these things in the past year, but it happened before that fill in "7".

1= once in the past year	5= 11-20 times in the past year
2= twice in the past year	6= more than 20 times in the past year
3= 3-5 times in the past year	7= not in the past year, but it did happen
4= 6-10 times in the past year	0= this has never happened

1. My mother showed my father she cared even though they disagreed.
2. My mother explained her side of a disagreement to my father.
3. My mother insulted or swore at my father.
4. My mother threw something at my father that could hurt.
5. My mother twisted my father's arm or hair.
6. My mother showed respect for my father's feelings about an issue.
7. My mother pushed or shoved my father.
8. My mother used a knife or gun on my father.
9. My mother called my father fat or ugly.
10. My mother punched or hit my father with something that could hurt.
11. My mother destroyed something belonging to my father.
12. My mother choked my father.
13. My mother shouted or yelled at my father.
14. My mother slammed my father against the wall.
15. My mother said she was sure they could work out a problem.
16. My mother beat up my father.
17. My mother grabbed my father.
18. My mother stomped out of the house or yard during a disagreement.
19. My mother slapped my father.
20. My mother suggested a compromise to a disagreement.

21. My mother burned or scalded my father on purpose.
22. My mother did something to spite my father.
23. My mother threatened to hit or throw something at my father.
24. My mother kicked my father.
25. My mother agreed to a solution to a disagreement my father suggested.
26. My father showed my mother he cared even though they disagreed.
27. My father explained his side of a disagreement to my mother.
28. My father insulted or swore at my mother.
29. My father threw something at my mother that could hurt.
30. My father twisted my mother's arm or hair.
31. My father showed respect for my mother's feelings about an issue.
32. My father pushed or shoved my mother.
33. My father used a knife or gun on my mother.
34. My father called my mother fat or ugly.
35. My father punched or hit my mother with something that could hurt.
36. My father destroyed something belonging to my mother.
37. My father choked my mother.
38. My father shouted or yelled at my mother.
39. My father slammed my mother against the wall.
40. My father said he was sure they could work out a problem.
41. My father beat up my mother.
42. My father grabbed my mother.
43. My father stomped out of the house or yard during a disagreement.
44. My father slapped my mother.
45. My father suggested a compromise to a disagreement.
46. My father burned or scalded my mother on purpose.
47. My father did something to spite my mother.
48. My father threatened to hit or throw something at my mother.
49. My father kicked my mother.
50. My father agreed to a solution to a disagreement my mother suggested.

Appendix D

Mental Health Inventory

These questions are about how you feel, and how things have been with you mostly within the past month.
For each question please fill in the circle for the one answer that comes closest to the way you have been feeling.

1. How happy, satisfied, or pleased have you been with your personal life during the past month?
   Extremely happy, could not have been more satisfied or pleased..... 1
   Very happy most of the time.....2
   Generally satisfied, pleased.....3
   Sometimes fairly satisfied, sometimes fairly unhappy.....4
   Generally dissatisfied, unhappy.....5
   Very dissatisfied, unhappy most of the time..... 6

2. How much of the time have you felt lonely during the past month?
   All of the time.....1
   Most of the time.....2
   A good bit of the time.....3
   Some of the time.....4
   A little of the time.....5
   None of the time.....6

3. How often do you become nervous or jumpy when faced with excitement or unexpected situations during the past month?
   Always.....1
   Very often.....2
   Fairly often.....3
   Sometimes.....4
   Almost never.....5
   Never.....6

4. During the past month, how much of the time have you felt that the future looks hopeful and promising?
   All of the time.....1
   Most of the time.....2
   A good bit of the time.....3
   Some of the time.....4
   A little of the time.....5
   None of the time.....6

5. How often do you eat too much?
   Very often.....1
   Fairly often.....2
   Sometimes.....3
   Almost never.....4
   Never.....5

6. How much of the time, during the past month, has your daily life been full of things that were interesting to you?
   All of the time.....1
   Most of the time.....2
   A good bit of the time.....3
   Some of the time.....4
   A little of the time.....5
   None of the time.....6

7. How much of the time, during the past month, did you feel relaxed and free of tension?
   All of the time.....1
   Most of the time.....2
   A good bit of the time.....3
   Some of the time.....4
   A little of the time.....5
   None of the time.....6

8. During the past month, how much of the time have you generally enjoyed the things you do?
   All of the time.....1
   Most of the time.....2
   A good bit of the time.....3
   Some of the time.....4
   A little of the time.....5
   None of the time.....6

9. During the past month, have you had any reason to wonder if you were losing your mind, or losing control over the way you act, talk, think, feel, or of you memory?
   No, not at all.....1
   Maybe a little.....2
   Yes, but not enough to be concerned
   or worried about it.....3
   Yes, and I have been a little concerned.....4
   Yes, and I am quite concerned.....5
   Yes, and I am very much concerned about it.....6

10. In general, would you say your morals have been above reproach?
    Yes, definitely.....1
    Yes, probably.....2
    I don't know.....3
    Probably not.....4
    Definitely not.....5

11. Did you feel depressed during the past month?
    Yes, to the point that I did not care about
    anything for days at a time.....1
    Yes, very depressed almost everyday.....2
    Yes, quite depressed several times.....3
    Yes, a little depressed now and then.....4
    No, never felt depressed at all.....5

12. During the past month, how much of the time have you felt loved and wanted?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

13. How much of the time, during the past month, have you been a very nervous person?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

14. When you got up in the morning, this past month, about how often did you expect to have and interesting day?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

15. How often has there been times in your life when you felt you acted like a coward?
    Very often.....1
    Fairly often.....2
    Sometimes.....3
    Almost never.....4
    Never.....5

16. During the past month, how much of the time have you felt tense or "high-strung"?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

17. During the past month, have you been in firm control of your behavior, thoughts, emotions, feelings?
    Yes, very definitely.....1
    Yes, for the most part.....2
    Yes, I guess so.....3
    No, not to well.....4
    No, and I am somewhat disturbed.....5
    No, and I am very disturbed.....6

18. During the past month, how often did your hands shake while trying to do something?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

19. During the past month, how often did you feel that you had nothing to look forward to?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

20. Would you say that you give every penny you can to charity?
    Yes, definitely.....1
    Yes, for the most part.....2
    Yes, I try.....3
    No.....4

21. How much of the time, during the past month, have you felt calm and peaceful?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

22. How much of the time, during the past month, have you felt emotionally stable?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

23. How much of the time, during the past month, have you felt downhearted and blue?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

24. How often have you felt like crying, during the past month?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

25. In choosing you friends, how important to you are things like their race, their religion, or their political beliefs?
    Always very important.....1
    Almost always important.....2
    Usually important.....3
    Not to important.....4

Hardly ever important.....5
Not important at all.....6

26. During the past month, how often did you feel that others would be better off if you were dead?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

27. How much of the time, during the past month, were you able to relax without difficulty?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

28. During the past month, how much of the time did you feel that your love relationships, loving and being loved, were full and complete?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

29. How often during the past month, did you feel that nothing turned out for you the way you wanted it to?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

30. How much have you been bothered by nervousness, or your "nerves" during the past month?
    Extremely so, to the point where I could not
        take care of things.....1
    Very much bothered.....2

Bothered quite a bit by nerves.....3
Bothered some, enough to notice.....4
Bothered just a little by nerves.....5
Not bothered at all by this.....6

31. During the past month, how much of the time has living been a wonderful adventure for you?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

32. If it is more convenient for you to do so, how often will you tell a lie?
    Very often tell a lie.....1
    Fairly often.....2
    Sometimes tell a lie.....3
    Almost never.....4
    Never tell a lie.....5

33. How often, during the past month, have you felt so down in the dumps that nothing could cheer you up?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

34. During the past month, did you ever think about taking your own life?
    Yes, very often.....1
    Yes, fairly often.....2
    Yes, a couple of times.....3
    Yes, at one time.....4
    No, never.....5

35. During the past month, how much of the time have you felt restless, fidgety, or impatient?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5

None of the time.....6

36. How often have you done anything of a sexual nature that society does not approve of?
    Very often.....1
    Fairly often.....2
    Sometimes.....3
    Almost never.....4
    Never.....5

37. During the past month, how much of the time have you been moody or brooded about things?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

38. How much of the time, during the past month, have you felt cheerful, lighthearted?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

39. During the past month, how often did you get rattled, upset, or flustered?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

40. Are your table manners at home just as good as they are when you are invited out to dinner?
    Yes, always just as good.....1
    Yes, with rare exceptions.....2
    Yes, usually just as good.....3
    No, usually worse at home.....4
    No, quite a bit worse at home.....5
    No, very bad at home.....6

41. During the past month, have you been anxious or worried?
    Yes, extremely so, to the point of being sick or almost sick.....1
    Yes, very much so.....2
    Yes, quite a bit.....3
    Yes, some, enough to bother me.....4
    Yes, a little bit.....5
    No, not at all.....6

42. During the past month, how much of the time were you a happy person?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

43. How often during the past month did you find yourself having difficulty trying to calm down?
    Always.....1
    Very often.....2
    Fairly often.....3
    Sometimes.....4
    Almost never.....5
    Never.....6

44. During the past month, how much of the time have you been in low or very low spirits?
    All of the time.....1
    Most of the time.....2
    A good bit of the time.....3
    Some of the time.....4
    A little of the time.....5
    None of the time.....6

45. How often, during the past month, have you been waking up feeling fresh and rested?
    Always, every day.....1
    Almost every day.....2
    Most days.....3
    Some days, but usually not.....4
    Hardly ever.....5
    Never wake up feeling rested.....6

46. During the past month, have you been under or felt you were under any strain, stress or pressure?

Yes, almost more that I could stand or bear.....1
Yes, quite a bit of pressure.....2
Yes, some, more than usual.....3
Yes, some, but about normal.....4
Yes, a little bit.....5
No, not at all.....6

Appendix E

Debriefing Statement

Project Title: Conflict Styles
Investigator: Jodell Bauer

There has been considerable speculation about the effects of family structure and parental conflict. In prior studies research has shown that the amount of conflict and the way parents resolve or express conflict may have more affect on adjustment of children than the structure of the family (divorced or intact). The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between types of conflict between parents and the adjustment of college undergraduates.

All participants received the same materials. The Conflict Tactic Scale-2 was used to assess conflict styles of the mother and father of the participant. The different tactic styles measured were physical aggression, psychological aggression, and negotiation. The Mental Health Inventory was used to assess psychological adjustment of the participants.

If you have any further questions about this study you may contact this experimenter at [redacted] or research advisor Genie Lenihan, Ph.D. at [redacted]. For individuals who may find this subject matter distressing the Counseling Center on campus can be reached at [redacted] from 8:00 to 4:30 Monday through Friday.